

The University of Chicago

THE JEWISH QUESTION IN THE FIRST RUSSIAN DUMA

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES IN CANDIDACY
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
MARCH, 1943

By
SIDNEY S. HARCAVE

Reprinted from
JEWISH SOCIAL STUDIES, Vol. VI, No. 2, April, 1944

The University of Chicago

THE JEWISH QUESTION IN THE FIRST RUSSIAN DUMA

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES IN CANDIDACY
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
MARCH, 1943

By
SIDNEY S. HARCAVE

Reprinted from
JEWISH SOCIAL STUDIES, Vol. VI, No. 2, April, 1944



THE JEWISH QUESTION IN THE FIRST RUSSIAN DUMA

By SIDNEY S. HARGAVE

On April 27 / May 10, 1906 the First State Duma of the Russian Empire opened in St. Petersburg. The event was regarded as of primary historic significance, for it represented the major achievement of the Revolution of 1905. Among the deputies who took their seats were twelve Jews, whose presence attested the ripening political development of their brethren in Russia.

The Revolution of 1905 had acted as a catalyst in the growth of the political self-consciousness and national self-awareness of Russian Jewry. The establishment of such organizations as the Russian Zionist Organization, the Bund and the Labor Zionist groups afforded clear evidence of the accelerating tempo of Russian Jewish life. One of the most important problems then before the Russian Jews was that of their critical position in the body politic and their complete lack of rights. While proposed solutions of this problem varied greatly, all Jews were agreed that the attainment of political and civil equality was the most immediate objective; and the revolution seemed indeed to augur its realization. Principal agency of the movement was the League for the Attainment of Full Rights for the Jewish People of Russia, founded in March 1905. This body, which represented the articulate sections of Russian Jewry (with the exception of the Jewish socialists), therefore came to serve as the focus of Jewish participation in Russian parliamentary activity.

The Jewish Deputies

The spread of the revolution in the latter half of 1905 eventuated in the issuance on October 17/30, of a manifesto by Tsar Nicholas II promising the institution of a constitutional regime. The manifesto

announced that a State Duma endowed with legislative power and elected by the male population would be created. Shortly after October, the election campaign began. Led by the League, a large section of the Russian Jews took part in it. The Jewish socialists, however, boycotted it in the belief that the revolution was still strong enough to overthrow the Tsarist regime, and that the Duma would consequently be but a means of diverting and enfeebling that popular movement. A spirited campaign, nonetheless, took place, and twelve Jewish deputies, all affiliated with the League, were elected. Nine of these were Cadets, that is, members of the liberal Constitutional Democratic Party. Three joined the Trudovik (labor) group, a newly-created populist faction somewhat to the left of the Cadets and drawn mainly from the peasantry. Five were also Zionists. First place among the Jewish deputies was held by M. M. Vinaver, chairman of the League and one of the founders and leaders of the Cadet Party. Shmarya Levin and S. Y. Rozenbaum, both leading Zionists, and Leon Bramson, a distinguished Jewish nationalist but not a Zionist, were among the more eminent of the group. The others were: G. Bruk, M. Chervonenkis, S. Frenkel, G. Iollos, N. Katzenelson, M. Ostrogorskii, M. Sheftel and V. Yakubson.

Ranging from fervid Zionist to so-called assimilationist, the Jewish deputies mirrored the several ideological tendencies of Russian Jewry. All were members of the liberal professions; all had received some sort of Jewish education; all were committed to the struggle for Jewish rights. They were, however, divided by differences of political opinion and even more of attitude toward the Jewish question.

Upon taking their seats, the Jewish deputies learned of the mandates which the various elements among the Jews had formulated for them. In the organ of the Territorialists they could read that the electorate had voted "not for a Cadet, not for a Social Democrat, not for a radical, not for a Zionist but for a Jew."¹ The Jewish deputies, it was stated, should not content themselves with half-way measures but should declare to the Duma and to all of Russia "that the Jews demanded full rights or nothing."² Other statements were less categorical, less exclusively pre-occupied with the Jewish question, but in all quarters it was expected

¹ Paperin, L., "K Nashim Deputatam," in *Yevreiskii Golos*, April 30, 1906, cols. 478-80.

² *id.*, "Vse ili Nichevo," *ibid.*, May 7, 1906, cols. 525-29.

that the Jewish deputies would speak out boldly in behalf of Jewish equality, demanding it as a right rather than privilege.³ Whether or not the Jews expected success in their struggle, they looked to the deputies to display an effort commensurate with the task. There was great hope among the large mass of Russian Jewry that the First State Duma, so distinguished in composition and so liberal in temper, would substantially improve their plight.

The Question of a Jewish Bloc

Effective representation of the Jews required, in the opinion of many, the formation of a Jewish *bloc* or parliamentary group in the Duma. There were, however, many persons of influence, including Vinaver himself, who opposed this course. The Central Bureau of the League took no formal stand on the issue, leaving the decision to the convention of the organization which was soon to meet. On the day before the opening of the Duma, the Central Bureau did, however, issue what might be considered an interim decision. The time had not come, it said, for a separate national group, though the deputies should consult together on matters germane to the Jews, and should not deliver speeches on Jewish questions without first clearing with the Central Bureau.⁴

On May 9/22, some two weeks after the opening of the Duma, the fourth and last convention of the League opened in St. Petersburg. The Zionists, who controlled a majority of the votes, pressed the question of a parliamentary *bloc*. They wanted the Jewish deputies to give precedence to Jewish issues. Pasmanik, a Zionist writer, told them that their duty was to fight not only for the civic rights of Jews, but also for their recognition as a distinctive nationality. They should, he felt, consider all measures primarily from the Jewish viewpoint.⁵ This sentiment, however, was by no means universal.

The discussions, both long and heated, revealed an ideological schism which could scarcely be ignored. Revolving around the immediate question of a separate parliamentary *bloc*, they soon came to involve even greater issues, including that of the nature and very existence of the

³ *Yudishe Folk*, May 21, 1906, p. 4; *Voskhod*, April 27, 1906, col. 1.

⁴ *Voskhod*, May 4, 1906, col. 16.

⁵ *Folks-tzeitung*, May 21/June 3, 1906, p. 2-3.

League. The Zionists sought a strong, nationalist organization, more cohesive than it then was. Instead of achieving their aim, however, they but helped to shorten the League's existence; for their opponents, though fewer in number, were equally determined not to yield to Zionist pressure.

The extent of these internal differences came out clearly in the discussions over the formation of a parliamentary *bloc*. The non-Zionists pointed out that *de facto* unity among the twelve deputies already existed. Why then demand it *de jure*? Despite this argument, however, the convention voted that the Jewish deputies be urged to form a separate group. Only when several of them thereupon threatened to resign from the League was a weaker resolution substituted, recommending only that the Jewish deputies take common counsel on Jewish questions.⁶ An open break was thus avoided, and the earlier decision of the Central Bureau was in effect implemented. Some form of organization, however tenuous, was at least achieved.

The reasons for the opposition to a Jewish *bloc* were many. Men like Vinaver felt that their obligations to the Cadet Party were incompatible with membership in a distinctive Jewish group; while Bramson, who was critical of the Cadets, would not sever his ties with the Trudovik group. Moreover, Vinaver and others considered Jewish nationalism in any form undesirable. They had no wish to see in the Duma a group comparable to the stridently nationalistic Polish *bloc*.⁷ In the event, the Jewish deputies did meet together, consulting one another on tactics and did keep close touch with the Central Bureau of the League.⁸

First Moves

When the Duma finally opened, it was found to be predominantly liberal in temper, including many prominent figures in national life and scholarship. The Liberal Cadets or Constitutional Democrats (some 180 of the total 486 deputies) formed by far the largest single group. With the support of the national *blocs* they commanded over two hundred votes. The Trudoviki, ninety-four in number, generally followed their lead. The conservative Octobrists numbered thirty-eight, while the various

⁶ *Yudishe Folk*, May 24, 1906, p. 19-22.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 21.

⁸ *Folks-tzeitung*, May 10/23, 1906, p. 1-2.

shades of socialists supplied some twenty-odd deputies. Aside from a handful of extreme Rightists, the remainder of the deputies were non-partisan.⁹

From the first there were misgivings about the potentialities of the new body. For all its ostensible liberalism, the source of power still lay with the autocracy. Moreover, its functions were circumscribed by law, and still more limited in fact. A sieve through which legislation would have to pass, it had, nonetheless, little assurance that such measures as it approved would indeed become law; for legislation required the approval also of both the undemocratic State Soviet (Council) and of the Tsar. The Duma was free to discuss anything and everything. It might approve any legislation permissible under the fundamental laws of the Empire. But whether its wishes would become law was another question. The publication of the fundamental laws a few days before the opening of the assembly was certainly an unfavorable omen, affirming as it did the existing pattern of things.¹⁰

The session was opened with a speech from the throne which left all oppositional elements dissatisfied. It failed to indicate any intention on the part of the government to introduce fundamental changes. For the Jews it contained no comfort; it did not even mention the Jewish problem. A leading Jewish periodical, commenting on it, raised the larger question whether the Tsar's words gave any hope for a really constitutional regime. The periodical pointed out clearly that universal rights and rights for the Jews were interrelated.

The opposition immediately prepared to indicate its program through an answer to the speech from the throne. On April 30 / May 13, a committee of thirty-three, including Vinaver and Sheftel, was elected to prepare the reply;¹¹ but neither in this preliminary work nor in the ultimate debate in the Chamber did the Jewish question receive explicit recognition. The Polish deputies spoke openly of the problems of their nationals, but the Jewish deputies remained silent. A measure close to the hearts of the Jews, the abolition of all restrictions and privileges based

⁹ *Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entziklopediya*, vol. xviii (Moscow 1930), p. 295.

¹⁰ For details on the organization of the Duma, see Levin, Alfred, *The Second Duma* (New Haven 1940).

¹¹ Russia, Gosudarstvennaya Duma, *Stenograficheskie Otchety*, Sozyv 1-2, 4 vols. (St. Petersburg 1906-07), vol. i, p. 43. (Hereafter cited as *Stenog. Ot.*)

on nationality and religion, was, however, included in the list of desired changes. Nevertheless, it was the opinion of leading Jews that the abolition of specifically anti-Jewish measures should be demanded in so many words, over and above any general claims for universal equality. They had learned only too well that there could be a large gap between a vague formulation and actual implementation.¹²

The Duma's reply to the speech from the throne was a forthright statement of its desire for a genuinely free and constitutional regime. It demanded the establishment of fundamental liberties and the abolition of inequalities. The hope that the needs of the various nationalities would be satisfied was also expressed.¹³

Discussing this reply on May 13/26, Goremykin, the President of the Council of Ministers, outlined some of the measures currently under consideration by that body; but his failure to mention any of the generally desired reforms demonstrated once more the government's resistance to change.¹⁴ Out of the debates which followed the reply came the first word of the Jewish question.

Among the many to point out the omissions in Goremykin's statement was Vinaver, who delivered the maiden speech of the Jewish deputies. There could, he said, be no question of a general solution of current ills or of the establishment of freedom and order, so long as there were people deprived of their rights, so long as exceptional laws existed. "We Jews, representatives of one of the most tormented nationalities in the land," he observed, "have never uttered a word about ourselves, because we did not consider it fitting to speak in this place of civil inequality." The Jews had expected to hear their problems discussed. Unfortunately, however, it was now clear that the administration intended to follow its old path. "So long," he warned the government, "as you countenance civil slavery, there will be no peace in the country. . . . By ignoring the desperate cry of six million hearts you have shown that you wish to pursue the old paths." The Jews, he added, would support those elements which strove for a constitutional regime. Moreover, so long as national and religious discrimination continued, no creative achieve-

¹² *ibid.*, 239-41.

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ *ibid.*, 320-24.

ment would be possible. The government had been silent on these questions. He therefore desired a vote of censure on the declaration which it had just made.¹⁵

Vinaver's speech was incisive and impressive. The *Yudishe Folk* characterized it roundly as marking the end of the period of *shtadlanim*.¹⁶

The Struggle for Equality

The Jewish question had now been placed squarely on the parliamentary *tapis*. While the abolition of Jewish disabilities would obviously have to come as part of a law ending *all* national, religious and class discrimination, Jewish opinion was anxious to have the Jewish issue stated explicitly, in order to insure that equality be granted not only in principle, but also in fact. The first step toward this end was, of course, the introduction of a legislative project.

Shmarya Levin tells how he urged on the Cadets that such a move should take precedence over any discussion of the agrarian problem. He feared lest the solution of the latter (a bold hope indeed) might cause the question of the Jews to be forgotten.¹⁷ The desired move, however, had to wait, largely because the Jewish deputies tended to play along with the Cadets rather than pursue an independent line. The result was, of course, that the latter, rather than the Jews, determined the sequence in which issues should be discussed.

On May 15/28, a declaration (*zayavlenie*), signed by 151 deputies, including eleven of the Jews, was introduced into the Duma proposing the enactment of a basic law on civil equality. The declaration, which was intended as the basis for a project to be worked out fully in the course of debate, proposed the establishment of the principle of equality before the law, and the abolition of all restrictions based on religion and nationality.¹⁸

The question came up again on June 5/18, when the formation of a committee to prepare a project on civil equality was placed on the order of the day. This provided an opportunity for full-dress discussion on

¹⁵ *ibid.*, 338-39. Portions of the translation are from Dubnow, S. M., *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland* (Philadelphia 1916-20), vol. iii, p. 135.

¹⁶ *Yudishe Folk*, May 24, 1906, p. 3.

¹⁷ Levin, S., *The Arena* (New York 1932), p. 297.

¹⁸ *Stenog. Ot.*, vol. i, 378.

inequality in general and on that of the Jews in particular. The debate was opened by F. F. Kokoshkin, a Cadet, who agreed with the current opinion that the outbreak of pogroms was intimately connected with the civil inequality under which the Jews were living.¹⁹

Different entirely was the attitude of the Octobrist Count Geiden, who spoke on the following day. Here was the stern "realist." Sympathetic to the idea that the Jews should be granted the rights of man, he was convinced nevertheless that blanket emancipation was not the answer to the problem. Civic equality for Jews, peasants and women, with all its attendant issues, was a complicated business.²⁰ It was not clear from Count Geiden's words whether his caution derived from a desire to make certain that the granting of equal rights to Jews should be successful or from a desire to hamstring the measure. The latter alternative is the more plausible for, in view of the general temper of the Duma, outright opposition to Jewish equality would be less disingenuous than subterfuge.

Vinaver replied in a manner which made it clear that he regarded the Count's intentions as obstructionist. The answer to the problem of equality for the Jews, he felt, was a simple one: make all citizens equal before the law. "You say," he added, "that the Jewish question is a burning one. So it is, probably most of all for us, for all who suffer and it becomes all the more so as you, under the pretext of complexity, keep putting it off."²¹

Geiden's argument was developed further by Prince Volkonskii, likewise an Octobrist. Asserting, in the same way, that the question of equality in general and of the Jews in particular required much more thought and labor than had been given it, he declared that the Jewish problem had never really been solved anywhere in the world, and that this fact itself imposed prudence. Considering the deep prejudice against Jews in Russia, it ought first to be proved that the proposed measure would do more good than harm.²²

In contrast to the reservations of Volkonskii was the unequivocal statement of the Cadet leader, I. Petrunkevich, which was typical of the party's stand. Only in Russia, he asserted, did the question of rights for

¹⁹ *ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 1006-10.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 1050-52.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 1057.

²² *ibid.*, p. 1057-58.

Jews remain. This was not a question which called for casuistic refinements (*razrabotki*). At this time, the time of the Bialystok pogrom,²³ all possible speed must be made in the abolition of restrictions.²⁴

Rozenbaum dealt both with the speeches of Count Geiden and Prince Volkonskii. He found it difficult to understand why the Jewish problem should not appear clear to anyone. Certainly, it presented no difficulties to the Duma or to the Russian people. This had been indicated in the elections. Listing all the disabilities under which the Jews of Russia lived, Rozenbaum found it incomprehensible that any deputy could entertain doubts about the answer. It was his opinion that to deny equality to the Jews would work harm on the whole Russian people.²⁵

Another Jewish deputy, Shmarya Levin, also spoke up on the Jewish question. Levin was concerned lest the chief point, the attainment of equality, be overlooked. In Russia there was no equality. "It seems to me," he said, "that Prince Volkonskii, as a Russian patriot, should desire to place Russia on the same level as Germany, England and France, rather than as Rumania." "Henceforth," he added, "the principle of equality will be in the forefront, the principle which is to be the foundation on which we shall build the renewal of all Russia, and all the peoples who live in Russia."²⁶

On June 9/22, a committee of thirty-three was elected to work out a project of laws on civil equality. Vinaver, Levin, Bramson, Ostrogroskii and Iollos were among its members.²⁷ The election of the committee, however, was as far as the First Duma went, for before the work of the committee could be completed, the assembly was dissolved. The establishment of the principle of equality had not been pressed strongly enough and had been brought up rather belatedly. Had the question of civil equality been handled earlier and with more despatch, the chances of success would, in the face of obdurate opposition from the Tsar's court, have been slight. There would, however, have been the cold comfort that the attempt had been carried through as far as was possible under the circumstances.

²³ *Vide infra*.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 1064-65.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 1072-74.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 1103-05.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 1157.

The Bialystok Pogrom

Another lengthy discussion of the Jewish situation was made possible, not by design, but by accident. It was not so much the daily plight of the Jews which roused the Duma as that periodic explosion, symptomatic of the condition, the pogrom. On May 8/21, an interpellation was accepted, addressed to the Minister of Internal Affairs, Stolypin, concerning the complicity of the police in the printing of inflammatory literature.²⁸ But before the minister could reply, an explosion occurred. From June 1/14 to June 3/16, a pogrom as severe as any in the recent history of Russia took place at Bialystok, in the province of Grodno. On June 2/15, the news reached the Duma. Coming in the midst of its first session, when an attempt was at last being made to establish a constitutional regime, the effect was electric. Here was a forceful reminder that the old order had by no means passed away.

On June 2/15, two of the Jewish deputies, Yakubson and Sheftel, appealed to the Minister of Internal Affairs to halt the outbreak. The minister promised to act immediately, but did not, and the disaster continued through the following day.²⁹ The Jewish deputies at once took common counsel concerning the events,³⁰ and parliamentary action followed.

An interpellation addressed to the Minister of Internal Affairs, based on a report prepared by Sheftel, was submitted to the Duma on June 2/15.³¹ The minister was asked whether the necessary steps were being taken to protect the Jews of Bialystok and whether he intended to forestall similar situations in other localities.³²

The reading of the interpellation set off a series of speeches expressing the revulsion which the pogrom had caused among all parliamentary groups. V. D. Nabokov, a Cadet, demanded immediate action by the Duma. He recalled that the government had often had a hand in pogroms, either by direct aid or by doing nothing to stop them.³³

²⁸ *ibid.*, vol. i, p. 254, 236. An interpellation accepted by the Duma required an answer by the minister within a month.

²⁹ *Folks-tzeitung*, June 29/July 12, 1906, p. 1.

³⁰ *Telegraf*, June 9/22, 1906, p. 2.

³¹ *Forverts*, June 16, 1906, p. 1.

³² *Stenog. Ot.*, vol. ii, p. 952.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 952-53.

Nabokov's remarks were a gauge of the temper of the Duma. However varied their sacred motives may have been, the deputies shared an almost universal revulsion at what had occurred.

Nabokov was followed by Levin, who spoke as a representative of the Jews. Bialystok, he said, did not stand alone; it was but one part of a larger scheme. "It flows out of a coherent system, out of that system with which you so unanimously wish to struggle." The Jews were, he asserted, used as a target by the government because they were weak. Were there no Jews, another group would have been sought by the government for its purposes during moments of crisis. In the October days the government had attacked the Jews because it had no other means of striking at the revolution. The Jews were weak, in his opinion, because they lacked the most elementary rights. This situation would not continue for all time. The Jews, said Levin, stood by those who strove for freedom and the present instance was part of the struggle. Concluding, he asked for immediate action.³⁴ Levin's speech was noteworthy for its bitterness and even more as an expression of Jewish alliance with the liberation movement, even in such a moment of depression.

Each group in the Duma expressed itself at length on the events at Bialystok. The basic ills of the Jews were reviewed. S. A. Kotlyarevskii, a Cadet, contending that the Jews' lack of civil rights provided an incentive for pogroms, advocated the abolition of all racial or religious discrimination.³⁵ Many Trudoviks also took the floor, including their leader, A. Aladyn, who asserted that responsibility for the pogroms lay not with the people but with the administration. He proposed the appointment of a commission of inquiry and the despatch of one or two deputies to the scene of the disaster.³⁶ A. I. Parchevskii, speaking for the deputies from the Kingdom of Poland, likewise demanded speedy action.³⁷ These and the many other speakers pointed up the complicity of the government in the occurrence of the pogroms, and sought to show that the people as such had no part in them.

As the speeches continued, the chair sought to bring the discussion to a close. Finally, the Duma voted unanimously to act quickly, to accept

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 953-54.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 958-59.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 957.

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 957-58.

the interpellation, and to set up a commission of inquiry.³⁸ Thirty-three deputies were accordingly appointed to this body, of which A. A. Tokarskii, a Cadet, was chairman. In the evening of June 2/15, the committee selected Professor Shchepkin and M. Arakantzev, Cadets from Odessa and the Don Military District, respectively, and the Jewish Trudovik Yakubson to visit the scene of the outbreak.³⁹ It is indicative of the temper of the Duma that, as an oppositional body, it did not intend to rely on the report which the administration might put out. Moreover, it regarded the inquiry as an opportunity to attack the government, and used it for this purpose.

The uneasiness of the Duma was more than matched by that of the general public. In itself a pogrom would be certain to arouse public opinion, particularly among the Jews. Occurring as it did, however, during the session of the Duma, the reaction was even more pronounced. Resolutions of protest and expressions of sorrow and indignation came pouring in, and relief for the victims was at once organized.

At the instance of the Central Committee of the Bund, a joint conference was called with representatives of the Russian and Lettish Social Democrat Parties and the Socialist Revolutionary Party to discuss the tragedy. The conference resolved to propagandize the masses against antisemitism. It declared that the enemy of the people was not the Jewish or any other nationality but the Tsarist autocracy. One means of preventing the recurrence of such outbreaks was the general arming of the people for self-defense and the organization of a civilian militia. The Duma was asked to take strong measures toward ending the threat of pogroms.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, the reaction in parliament continued unabated. Although the report of the commission had not yet been delivered, discussion was revived as the result of Stolypin's reply on June 8/21 to the interpellation. The minister sought to minimize the charge that pogrom material had been printed at police headquarters. Only a few members of the police,

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 960-61.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 1343-44.

⁴⁰ *Folks-tzeitung*, June 29/July 12, 1906, p. 5. It is interesting to note that the Zionist Socialists who had not been invited to the conference issued a sharp protest against this slight. See Kirshnitz, A. and Rafes, M., eds., *Der Yidisher Arbeter* (Moscow 1925-28), vol. ii, fasc. 2, p. 160-62.

acting on their own initiative, had engaged in political activity, and this, he promised, would be ended. The speech was received with uproarious expressions of dissatisfaction.⁴¹

Stolypin was followed by Prince S. D. Urusov, formerly Assistant Minister of Internal Affairs and Governor of Bessarabia. Speaking from his own experience, Urusov refused to accept the whitewashing of the government. Citing names and addresses, he described in detail the operation of a printing-press in the police department at St. Petersburg which was turning out inflammatory leaflets inciting to pogroms. The latter, he observed, were neither spontaneous nor fortuitous; they followed a regular pattern. First came rumors of an impending massacre, then the dissemination of incendiary leaflets, then the appearance of strangers in the community, and finally the attack itself. Pogroms helped divide the country at a time when unity should be the ideal. The danger to the common weal would persist, he felt, so long as the ruling influences were such as not to suppress the makers of pogroms. The close of the Prince's speech was accompanied by shouts of "pogrom makers," directed against the ministers.⁴²

Following Urusov, Vinaver again presented the Jewish point of view. The government's answer, he said, was inadequate because it was really the culprit. Starting with the massacre at Kishinev, he reviewed in detail the part played by the administration in various disturbances. The government had spread and was spreading disorder, creating an official anarchy worse than the hidden one (an apparent reference to contemporary revolutionary disturbances).⁴³ Sheftel also spoke, indicating that the revolution had been accompanied by the shedding of Jewish blood.⁴⁴

Stolypin answered the accusations as best he could, without, however, weakening the hostility displayed by the Duma.⁴⁵ The debate continued into the next day, ranging far afield. The Georgian Social Democratic deputies brought up the question of the recent massacres of Armenians in Tiflis. Finally the discussion was closed on June 9/22, with the adoption of a formula for the passage to succeeding business, denouncing

⁴¹ *Stenog. Ot.*, vol. ii, p. 1125-29.

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 1129-32.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 1132-36.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 1182-86.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 1140-41.

pogroms and condemning the government.⁴⁶

On the same day the commission of inquiry returned from Bialystok. On the morrow it reported to the full committee and during the following days that body mulled over the report for final submission to the Duma. On June 15/28 its completion was announced. Some of the deputies demanded that it be presented at once,⁴⁷ and a proposal by M. A. Stakhovich, an Octobrist, that it be delayed was considered obstructionist and rejected. Finally, after a few technical hitches, June 22 / July 5 was selected as the date for presentation.⁴⁸

The report was delivered by Arakantzev. Complete figures, he said, were not yet available, but it had been established that eighty-two Jews and six Christians had been killed and seventy Jews and twelve Christians wounded in the course of the pogrom. Several days before the event, rumors of an impending outbreak had already circulated in connection with the assassination of the chief of police, Derkachev, which had occurred on May 28 / June 10. Although this official had been friendly toward the Jews, the latter had been charged by the Union of True Russians and others of the Black Hundreds with responsibility for the murder. The Black Hundreds, supported by many of the police, had been and were now still agitating against the Jews. As a result, there were two hostile camps in the city, the police and Black Hundreds on one side, and the Jews and supporters of the liberation movement on the other. Further, the police, who were aware of the difference between the Bund, the anarchists, the other revolutionaries and the liberals, chose in their public utterances to class all of them indiscriminately with the Jews as revolutionaries, thus creating one more cause for anti-Jewish feeling. The Black Hundreds had been distributing inflammatory leaflets among troops stationed in the district, denouncing the Jews and characterizing the Duma as a Jewish institution. The governor of the province, Kister, was hostile to the Jews, and in one military office a pogrom had been predicted for May 30 / June 12. In view of such rumors, a delegation from Bialystok had visited the governor, but received little satisfaction. There was, according to Arakantzev, no basic enmity between the Jewish

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 1196.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 1343-44.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 1577-83.

and Christian populations of the city. Nevertheless, a pogrom was expected.

Two religious processions, one Greek Orthodox, the other Catholic, had been scheduled for June 1/14. On that day there had been a heavy concentration of military personnel in the city. What had happened was not entirely clear. During the Orthodox procession, shots had been fired from one or more houses on the route. It was alleged that a bomb had been thrown at the procession, but this was questionable. With the first news of the firing, soldiers had appeared, and not long afterwards both the military and gangs of hoodlums had begun to attack Jewish homes. Rumors that Jews had killed a priest and fired at ikons had spread quickly, to be followed by attacks.

On the following day members of the police participated actively in the massacre. The disturbances spread to the area of the railroad station. Before the eyes of military and police officers, hooligans had beaten up Jewish passengers on incoming trains. In addition, soldiers had opened fire on several homes, while the groups attacking Jewish homes included members of both the military and the police.

Arakantzev concluded that the pogrom was not fortuitous, nor was it the consequence of national or religious hatred. The committee of thirty-three was convinced that it had been prepared and organized in advance, and that the identity of the culprit would most likely become clear if the police archives were made available. It was certain that officials were among those to blame. The official reports were false. The committee asked of the Minister of Internal Affairs whether any measures were being taken against responsible officials, and of the Minister of War whether he was aware of and whether he would punish the delinquencies which had been revealed.

In a lengthy peroration, Arakantzev reviewed the nationality policy of the Russian government, asserting that pogroms were the work, not of the Russian people, but of the government. Rejecting the assertion that all Jews were revolutionaries, he concluded with a rousing denunciation of the evils which were at the root of events such as the Bialystok pogrom.⁴⁹

On June 23 / July 6, Shchepkin and Yakubson added their observa-

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 1583-03.

tions. Shchepkin, delineating the patterns which pogroms followed, compared Russia with Turkey in the matter of massacres.⁵⁰ Yakubson went down the line, demanding an accounting from Stolypin, denouncing the governor of Grodno, the police and the army.⁵¹ The Jewish people, he said, charged the government, not the Russian people, with the responsibility for Bialystok.⁵²

The debate was not resumed until June 26 / July 9, and then followed the lines previously laid down. The conclusions of the report were generally accepted. Armed with a clear demonstration of what they had once merely believed to be true, the opponents of the government spoke with even more heat than before. The emphasis was divided between defense of the Jews and attacks on the administration. An accounting from the government, punishment of responsible officials and the guarantee against the occurrence of pogroms in the future, were among the chief demands.

In what was almost entirely a Judeophile discussion, there appeared for the first time a dissenting voice when Baron Eduard von der Ropp took the floor. The baron, despite his name, was a Pole, deputy from the province of Vilna, and the Roman Catholic Bishop of Vilna. In a speech larded with equivocations, he refrained from actually condoning or supporting actions of the government, but at the same time pointed out certain "irritating" effects which Jewish organizations might produce among the rest of the population. While praising the Jews for their organizational efforts, he counselled them to avoid actions which would "irritate" others.⁵³ Accused by succeeding speakers of confusing all Jews with a few types of Jewish organizations, he claimed that he had been misunderstood.⁵⁴

Whatever his intentions, the baron succeeded in arousing anger. "We Jews," Vinaver said in reply, "are deeply convinced that it is not the Russian people which is hostile to us, but this clique (pointing to the ministers), which seeks to rouse the people against us." He asserted once more that the Jews were convinced of the friendship of the Russian people.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 1623-32.

⁵¹ The attack on the army was later to bring him a challenge to a duel.

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 1632-42.

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 1729-33.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 1746.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 1733-40.

Levin followed after a short interval, speaking with his customary passion. He took grave exception to the baron's assertion that the Jews irritated the rest of the population with their organizations. The baron, he said, confused Jewish self-defense with revolutionary organizations. Describing the life of the Jews in Russia, Levin called for a basic understanding of the causes of pogroms. The Jews, he warned, were living under the sword of Damocles and it was the duty of the Duma to act quickly and effectively.⁵⁶

The discussion, which continued on June 27 / July 10 and June 29 / July 12, became increasingly repetitious. A few points were made, that the establishment of equality for all nationalities and faiths would prevent pogroms,⁵⁷ that the people desired a government which would protect all its citizens and provide real law and order.⁵⁸ All the possible changes seemed to have been rung and further talk seemed fruitless. In the name of the Social Democratic fraction, the Georgian deputy Dzghaparidze proposed the closure. The resolution submitted placed the blame for the pogrom on the administration. So long, it asserted, as the government was dominated by irresponsible leaders and the guilty were permitted to go unpunished, the local population should be granted the right to bear arms in self-defense.⁵⁹ Equal rights should be accorded to all nationalities. Direct and scathing as were its terms, however, the resolution failed of acceptance.⁶⁰

F. F. Kokoshkin, Cadet deputy from Moscow, proposed a formula to the effect that the Duma, having heard the report on the Bialystok pogrom, felt that the attack on the peaceful Jewish population was not the work of a hostile Christian community but the planned action of the authorities. All those responsible, high and low, should be brought swiftly to trial. It was clear that the government, recognizing its inability to stop the revolution, had attacked the weakest sections of the population, the Jews. The events which had taken place were unparalleled in the history of any civilized country. The immediate resignation of the ministry was demanded.⁶¹ On July 7/20, Kokoshkin's formula was

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 1742-46.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 1783-84.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 1784-87.

⁵⁹ This was the demand of the Social Democratic conference concerning Bialystok.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 1825-26.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 1826-29.

accepted with minor changes.⁶² The *affaire Bialystok* was at an end.

In a large measure the conduct of the Duma in this matter was typical of its short life. It had exhausted itself in words; for there was little else it could do. To be sure, these words had been forthright and direct enough, but they had issued in no sort of action. Their effect was limited to the echo which they found in the hearts of the people.

End of the First Duma

The days of the Duma were at an end. On July 9/22, the Tsar issued a manifesto dissolving it because, as he alleged, it had concerned itself with matters outside its jurisdiction, *e.g.*, with the activities of local authorities (an obvious reference to Bialystok). The manifesto announced that a new session would open on February 20 / March 5, 1907.⁶³ With the close of the First Duma, the law on civil equality remained buried in committee, and the fading hopes of the Jews for early equality received another blow.

On learning of the dissolution of the Duma, the oppositional elements of that body met in Vyborg, Finland, where they adopted a manifesto addressed to the people, calling on them to refuse to pay taxes or to furnish recruits for the armed forces; in other words, to adopt measures of passive resistance.⁶⁴ The call, which had but little effect, was signed by all the Jewish deputies. As a result, they were deprived of their electoral rights, and were therefore unable to stand for election to the new Assembly.⁶⁵ Several were sentenced to three-month terms of imprisonment. A few left the country to avoid this penalty. Bruk was deprived of his post as state rabbi.

In the reaction which followed, M. J. Herzenstein, a converted Jew, and a Cadet deputy in the First Duma, was assassinated by agents of the Union of True Russians.⁶⁶ At his funeral, L. M. Bramson spoke, citing as one of the reasons for the murder the fact of Herzenstein's Jewish birth.

⁶² *ibid.*, p. 2087-88.

⁶³ Russia, *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov, Sobranie Tretie, 1881-1913* (St. Petersburg 1885-1916), vol. xxvi. pt. 1, no. 28105, p. 738-39.

⁶⁴ See "Pervaya Gosudarstvennaya Duma v Vyborg," in *Krasnyi Arkhiv*, vol. lvii (1933), 85-99; Vinaver, M. M., *Istoriya Vyborgskago Vozzvaniya* (Petrograd 1917).

⁶⁵ See the biographical articles on the several deputies in the *Yevreiskaya Entziklopediya*.

⁶⁶ Gerassimoff, Alexander, *Der Kampf gegen die erste russische Revolution: Erinnerungen* (Frauenfeld-Leipzig 1934), p. 217.

Bramson promised that the Jews would continue to fight alongside the rest of the peoples of Russia for freedom.⁸⁷ In March, 1907, the Jewish deputy Iollos was assassinated.

Jewish Reactions

What was the attitude of the Jewish public towards its representatives? That the work of the Duma in general and of the twelve deputies in particular should be followed with minute attention was but to be expected. The chief record of this interest is the contemporary Jewish press. The general attitude, with the exception of the socialists, was that of a fond father listening to the voice of his offspring. It was, after all, a historic occasion. There were, nonetheless, certain standards, albeit instinctive rather than logical, by which the Jews judged the twelve. They were not unaffected by various pre-conceptions concerning the manner in which Jewish deputies should act and what they should accomplish.

Voskhod, the periodical most representative of the Attainers, sought to curb high expectations and to temper hope with realism. The Jews, said this journal, had expected the Jewish deputies to be heroes in speech and deed and to secure equal rights by lightning strokes. This was a mistake, for the attainment of such rights was inextricably bound up with the development of a constitutional regime, and that was not the work of a day.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, despite its moderate outlook, *Voskhod* printed numerous expressions of disappointment at the lack of initiative displayed by the Jewish deputies.

The Zionists, as Attainers, were likewise temperate in their judgment. As nationalists, however, they pitched their ambitions higher than other Attainers. The failure of their project for the establishment of a Jewish parliamentary *bloc* was a disappointment. Zionist publicists did not conceal their feeling that a Jewish group would have advanced the cause of the Jews as a nationality—morally, if in no other way.⁸⁹ Further, the Zionists shared the not uncommon view that, while the Jewish deputies had spoken with dignity and commanded respect, they had not shown

⁸⁷ *Folks-tzeitung*, July 30/August 12, 1906, p. 2.

⁸⁸ B-s, "Zadachi Yevreiskikh Predstavitelei v Gosudarstvennoi Dume," in *Voskhod*, May 26, 1906, cols. 1-3.

⁸⁹ *Yudishe Folk*, July 31, 1906, p. 5.

sufficient drive. They were, as one writer put it, too "Cadetish" and not sufficiently Jewish. They were contrasted with the Polish deputies who spoke solely as Poles, and went to what might even be described as extreme lengths of national egotism.⁷⁰

As for the Jewish socialists, their criticism was unsparing. In their view, the deputies were not their representatives. They continued to believe that the revolution would by-pass the Duma, but recognized that the latter could not be entirely ignored. Accordingly, they favored the small labor and social democratic groups in the hope that these groups would be able to employ the Duma for revolutionary purposes.

And what of the Bund? The Bund found no good word for the Jewish deputies. The Bundist writer, Alexandrov, characterized the League for Attainment and the twelve deputies as merely a section of the all-Russian *bourgeois* opposition. Charging the deputies with pusillanimity and failure to live up to their brave promises, he stigmatized their tactics as "typically Cadet"—reproof enough from a Bundist.⁷¹

Bundist opinion was categorically opposed to any support of the "bourgeois opposition" in the Duma. The Jewish deputies were condemned, on the one hand, for being in the Duma and on the other for not displaying more activity once they were. To the Bundists the Duma was but a sideshow of the revolution. Despite their unsparing criticism, however, they could not disguise an occasional undertone of pride when they reported the speeches of Jewish deputies about Jewish questions.⁷²

The other Jewish socialist parties and groups, with the exception of the Zionist Socialists, were still in their organizational infancy, and consequently did not pay much attention to the Duma. The Zionist Socialist Party was more articulate. The general pattern of its reaction followed that of the Russian Social Democrats. On the Jewish question, they exceeded even the Bundists in their fervent nationalism and consequently in their attacks on the Jewish deputies. The latter, they said, represented nobody but the Jewish *bourgeoisie*, which masked its own class interests behind nationalistic phrases. The Jewish workers should

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, June 14, 1906, p. 4-5; June 21, 1906, p. 5, 12-13; *Der Telegraf*, May 2/15, 1906, p. 2; June 25/July 8, 1906, p. 2; June 28/July 11, 1906, p. 2.

⁷¹ Alexandrov, S., "Yevreiskii Vopros v Dume i Dostigateli," in *Nashe Slovo*, June 22, 1906, p. 4-8.

⁷² See *Folks-tzeitung* and *Nashe Slovo*, April-July, 1906.

not permit themselves to be misled by these self-appointed leaders.⁷³ The Duma gave the Jews no hope; their emancipation could come only through a successful revolution.⁷⁴

Assessment and Appraisal

What had the First Duma accomplished for the Jews? Had it advanced Jewish political development? What were the achievements of the Jewish deputies?

The Duma brought no practical gains for the Jews. None of the evils under which they had been living were removed; none of their larger political aspirations were realized. To be sure, in view of its limited powers and the opposition of the Tsar and most of his advisers to any amelioration of the Jewish lot, little could have been expected from that body. If, however, a bill on civil equality had been passed, even though it were ultimately to be rejected by the State Council or the Tsar himself, the Jews would have experienced greater hope for ultimate success. The Jewish problem was, of course, closely linked with the constitutional development of Russia. The early dissolution of the Duma, revealing as it did that power still rested with the autocracy, dampened any hope for a rapid growth of constitutional government and parliamentary institutions. The chief comfort to the Jews lay in the fact that the Jewish problem had at least been discussed broadly and sympathetically by the Russian representative body. This was an advance over the days when public utterances on the problem had come from only one source—hostile officialdom.

The twelve Jewish deputies had, in Jewish eyes, acted creditably, if not energetically. They had spoken out vigorously and unequivocally, not as men cringing for favors, but as representatives of a people demanding its rights. This was an appreciable advance over earlier Jewish diplomacy when leaders had gone cap in hand begging the authorities for some amelioration of their people's plight. All of this was to the good. On the debit side, however, the Jews found that the twelve, some of whom (Iollos and Ostrogroskii, for example) had only tenuous ties with the Jews and their aspirations, had not measured up adequately to

⁷³ *Naier Veg*, no. 1, 1906, cols. 6-8.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, no. 3-4, 1906, cols. 99-102.

their tasks. Except in a few instances, they had waited for the Jewish question to be raised by others, instead of raising it by themselves. Indeed, the most extensive discussion of the subject had had to be provoked by a pogrom!

Many of the deputies did not act as energetically as they might have because their leader Vinaver, who was opposed to Jewish nationalism, exercised a controlling and restraining influence on them. Shmarya Levin relates that the deputies followed Vinaver, "some of us because we recognized his greatness, some of us because we had no alternative. I was among the former."⁷⁵ Moreover, the twelve worked, as a rule, within the framework of the Cadet fraction, following rather than leading.

The period of the First Duma represented a brief flowering of Jewish political and national life in Russia. Most indicative was the fact that the Zionist movement was caught up by the excitement of the Revolution of 1905. This period marked substantial advances in Jewish articulate self-expression. True, the hopes engendered by the First Duma were not fulfilled but the development of the Jews during this period was not without fruit, as their subsequent history was to prove. The very fact that they participated in the elections and in the Duma represented a significant advance in their status. In Russia, which had previously lacked parliamentary institutions comparable to those of Western Europe, such participation was of particular importance, for it substituted reality for dreams. Through the Duma Jewish political life came into contact with the instruments of representative government. And this was no mean achievement.

With the dissolution of the First Duma the hopes of the Jews did not fade. Its successor, they thought, would bring greater rewards. In fact, however, the crest of the revolution had been passed. Parliamentary development in Russia was to take a downward turn. The honeymoon period, in which Jewish deputies, confident of the support of a liberal majority, could speak bravely from the floor of the Duma was drawing to a close. Soon antisemitism would appear unmasked in the Russian parliament. Jewish hopes for civil and political liberation were not to be achieved during the existence of the Tsarist Empire.

⁷⁵ Levin, *op. cit.*, p. 299-300.

